

A. *AN* *Harbary*
EPISTLE
TO *Bibl. Sloaniano.*

Sir Richard Steele, *a. 5430.*

On his **PLAY**, call'd,

THE
CONSCIOUS LOVERS.

*'Tis hard e'er to convince a Fool he's so,
He loaths the Substance, but he loves the Show,
Hourly his learn'd Impertinence affords
A barren Superfluity of Words.*

DR. GARTH.

By B. VICTOR.

L O N D O N:

Printed for **W. CHETWOOD** at *Cato's-Head* in
Russel-Street, Covent-Garden; **S. CHAPMAN** at
the *Angel* in *Pall-Mall*; **J. STAGG**, *Westminster-*
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M. SMITH in *Russel-Court, Red-Lyon-Square*;
THO. EDLIN, over-against *Exeter Exchange* in
the *Strand*. 1722. (Price 6 d.) Where may
be had, The **LIFE** of the present **CZAR**.

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AN
EPISTLE
TO

Sir Richard Steele,

On his PLAY, call'd;



CONSIDER S.

It had for its conduct a real duty.
He lacks the substance, but he lacks the show,
Hence his learned impudence affords
A better superiority of words.
Dr. GARTH.

R. B. VICTOR.

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Printed for W. Chetwood at Chesham in
Russell-street, Covent-Garden; S. CHAPMAN at
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Hall; J. BROTHERTON at the Bible in Cornhill;
M. SMITH in Russell-street; R. A. Lyon-Spencer;
The Editor, over-against Baxter's Exchange in
the Strand, 1722. (Price 6d.) Where may
be had, The Life of the present Czar.



AN EPISTLE

TO

Sir Richard Steele.

S I R,



ALTHOUGH your Works
abound with polite Delica-
cies, which are beyond the
common Capacity of Man-
kind, yet I think there are Beauties
enough within the Reach of every

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unpre-

uprejudic'd Person, to incite both Gratitude and Esteem.

But there are a Kind of Creatures in the World, who, because they have not Faculties capable of any Thing that's Great, or Useful, employ themselves in a malapert Way of Detraction, under the Pretence of being Criticks. But that Mr. D---s, whose Writings are full of the grossest Errors, should take upon him to correct a Gentleman of an establish'd Reputation, and in rude scurrilous Language, is, in my Opinion, something more than common Assurance.

I must confess, that Criticism is very much beyond my Ability, and what I don't in the least pretend to; yet in this Case I can't help falling in to that Error you so justly disapprove in your ----- *Spectator*: But I hope, Sir, you

you will excuse this Digression from Rule, and the many other Imperfections you will meet with in this incorrect Letter, since it is my Zeal to you, and Desire of exposing your insolent abusive Opposite, makes me run this Hazard of publick Censure; not that I imagine you want any Assistance to your Defence, but because he is unworthy of your Resentment.

I should think myself guilty of an unpardonable Fault, if I give you the Trouble to peruse the many gross Errors I have observ'd thro' the Works of this Pedantick Writer, it is a just Notion of your own, Sir, that there is nothing more tiresome than the Works of a Critic, who writes in a positive Dogmatic Way, without either Language, Genius, or Imagination; therefore, Sir, I only send you some few

Reflections on the last scandalous Pamphlet which this hoary Bard, provoked by Spleen and Poverty, publish'd with a Design to do you a Prejudice, when, poor Man, he has rather taken a Method to bring a great Number of crowded Audiences.

I can but think the best Step the Author of the *Artifice* could have taken, would have been to have brib'd Mr. D---s to publish a Pamphlet containing the Inability of the Author, with the Errors of the Play, by Hear-say.

Now, Sir, to prove how great a Slave this Bard is to his Temper (by always vindicating the weaker Side, tho' contrary to Sense and Reason) I have read over your 65th *Spectator*, and will affirm, (in my Judgment) that you have

have given *Dorimant* a much more modest Character than *De---s*.

You say of him, that he is a direct Knave in his Designs, and a Clown in his Language; *Bellair* is his Friend and Admirer, in Return for which, forsooth, because he is a greater Wit than his said Friend, he thinks it reasonable to perswade him to marry a young Lady, whose Virtue he thinks will last no longer than till she is a Wife, and then she cannot but fall to his Share, as he is an irresistible fine Gentleman; his Falshood to Mrs. *Lovit*, and the Barbarity of triumphing over her Anguish for loving him, is another Instance of his Honesty, as well as his good Nature.

But, Sir, *De---s* calls him, in his Pamphlet, a young Courtier, haughty, vain, and prone to Anger, amorous, false,
and

and inconstant, he debauches *Lovit*, and betrays her, loves *Belinda*, and as soon as he enjoys her, is false to her.

I appeal to Reason, if a Man possess'd with the abovenam'd Qualities (so far from being a fine Gentleman) does not deserve to be kick'd out of all human Society; and yet Mr. *De--s*, in a Page or two farther, compares this Villain (if I may be allow'd to call a Man so that betrays his Friends) to the Character of the most Noble *Wilmot*, Earl of *Rochester*; as for the Earl's amorous Temper, and the Charms he had for the Ladies, if these are Vices, they are very natural in young Gentlemen, and what was very much the Trick of that Monarch's Court.

Now, Sir, as a Compliment to many Noblemen now living, that graced

ced King *Charles's* Court, this Critick has the Insolence to say, that *Derimant*, with that Villain's Mind, is an admirable Picture of a Courtier in the Court of King *Charles* the Second: It is very natural to suppose, Sir, if Vice, and Corruption, were in Vogue at that Court, as he affirms, that a vicious Play must please 'em; and it is as likely to imagine, that as in many Particulars we are much reform'd, the Play that pleas'd the corrupt Age then, should displease now; besides, Sir, as you took upon you the Character of a publick Cenfor of *Great Britain*, you had a Privilege, and it was your Duty to correct and reform us; and I am certain those who peruse your 65th *Spectator*, must allow you end it with a great deal of Modesty,

I must beg your Excuse if at present I consult what shall turn most to my own liking.

It is my real Opinion, that your Modesty would be less offended if *De---s*, or any other such Critick, would endeavour to pick out, and show the small Errors in your last Comedy, than that any one should enlarge upon the great Store of Beauties.

It is to be observ'd as a Wonder, Sir, that you have set forward with a very valuable approv'd Piece, and have ended with one (if possible) of much more Merit, so that you may challenge Envy to recall the Memory of the past, and the Practice of your present Writings, to come boldly Face to Face, where, by a just Resemblance of Features, the Fore-father may joyfully own his legitimate Posterity.

That

that Stream is not only surprizing, but very valuable, whose Course is as pure and lufid as the Fountain Head.

It was the Opinion of all the Antients, that Love (the ufual Argument of all Comedies) is there beft written where it is moft diftrefs'd, and in defpairing Paffion; that Part of Comedy feeming beft which is neareft Tragedy. It is alfo mention'd in many Places that they were banifh'd from the Theatre at *Athens*, and his'd from *Rome*, that brought Parasites on the Stage with Apifh Actions, Fools with uncivil Habits, or Courtezans with immodest Words. It is plain, Sir, you have taken the beft Method to move the Audience to the Suppreffion of Vice, by prefenting 'em with fuch a Worthy Noble Character as *Bevil*, a Man full

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of Mercy, Beneficence, Affability, Mildness, and Compassion,

His affable Behaviour to Seignior Carbonelli in the 3d Act, where he says, *You smile, Madam, to see me so complain-
saint whom I pay for this Visit, now I think it's not enough barely to pay those Men, whose Talents are superior to our own, I mean such Talents as would become a Gentleman.* This is a Beauty, whereby every one may distinguish a well bred Gentleman from a proud Upstart.

Notwithstanding the Author of the *Freeholder's Journal* has taken upon him to degrade the Character of *Bevil*, I am certain it infinitely exceeds that of *Pamphilus* in the *Andria* of Terence, which he prefers so much before it, if (as he allows) he is the finest Gentleman, whose Virtues are most permanent.

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He alledges, that *Bevil* is not under such Difficulties as *Pamphilus*, and that therefore, not falling from his Duty, was not so great a Virtue in him as in *Pamphilus*. But if the greatest Part of the learn'd World are not mistaken in their Opinions, *Bevil's* is much the more dangerous Circumstances, for it has been generally agreed, that Superfluity, and Ease, are the Decay of Reason, and Virtue, and allowing Poverty, and Want, to have their Temptations, yet our Judgment is in a much better Condition than when we abound, and consequently our Virtue is in less Danger. If this be true, (as I think it's undisputable) how Glorious a Character is that of *Bevil's*, who, in the Heat of Youth, and full Tide of Fortune, omits gratifying the most natural Passion of his Age, *viz.* The posses-

possessing himself of a Lady, who had Wit and Beauty to engage, and gratify every Sense, a Person whom he passionately lov'd, and that he was convinc'd had a Value for him; and this Restraint was not from a Fear of being disinherited, for he had an independant Sufficiency, but from the most generous Motion of the Mind, a Resignation of his Will to that of a kind beneficent Parent. *Pamphilus* was betroth'd to his *Glycerium*, so that he could not have abandon'd her, without the utmost Villany; besides, he had an Inducement to this Duty, if the Enjoyment of a Person whom he lov'd may be esteem'd so: Therefore all that this Resolution amounts to is, the preferring the Mistress of his Affections with an indigent low Fortune, to Infamy and Plenty, which, if it was a virtuous

ous Choice, was not a very extraordinary one in a Person of his Age: But *Bevil's* Merit has no Allay, since the Promise he makes to his Father, of marrying *Lucinda*, (which is the only Imperfection this Critick finds in his Integrity) is no Reflection, for he never made the least Overture of his amorous Passion to *Indiana*, because he would have it absolutely in his Power to discharge this Duty to his Father, without Injustice to her.

In short, if polite Language, noble Sentiments, and the subjecting every Passion to the Law of Reason, are the essential Parts of a fine Gentleman, *Bevil's* is a perfect Character.

I can't help telling you, Sir, with what sensible Pleasure I observ'd the chief Part of the Audience receive your Hero's

ro's Behaviour in the first Scene of the fourth Act, where his Friend Meptile challenges him upon a Suspicion of Treachery, and being of a warm hasty Temper, he endeavours to provoke him to a Duel.

It has been the Custom of almost every Author of Comedy, to draw the Gentleman a Man of such Courage as not to evade a Fight, tho' upon ever so slight an Occasion: Now, Sir, you have dar'd to give us an Example of a very unpolite Gentleman, one who these Beaus call a preaching Dervise, who, instead of the Sword's Point, gives his Antagonist moral Sentiments, by saying, *You know, Sir, I have often dar'd to disapprove of the Decisions a Tyrant Custom has introduc'd, to the Breach of all Laws both divine and human.* (And in a Speech or two after :) *I have of-*
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ten told you, in Confidence of Heart, I
 abhor'd the daring to offend the Author
 of Life. Is it possible, Sir, that De---s
 can be so void of Shame to attempt to
 prove, that vicious Characters is the
 only Business of Comedy, and that
 their corrupt Examples have the same
 design'd Effect upon the Audience as
 a virtuous honourable Character; he
 might as well say, it is in the Power
 of a handsome young wanton Woman
 of the Town to reclaim a wild whore-
 ing young Fellow from that Faculty;
 or, that a Baudy-house is a fitter Place
 for the Improvement of Virtue, than
 a Church.

What Method can be more moving;
 or what more likely to contradict that
 false Opinion of Honour, than the
 friendly Conduct by which Bevil con-
 vinces Myrtle, that there is nothing
 manly,

manly, but what is conducted by Reason, and is agreeable to the Practice of Virtue: Which admirable Scene closes with these Lines,

*Betray'd by Honour, and compell'd by
Shame,
They hazard Being to preserve a Name;
Nor dare inquire into the dread Mistake,
Till plung'd in sad Eternity they wake.*

This I am well assur'd of, Sir, that the Purity of the Stile, the Delicacy of the Turns, and the Justness of the Characters, are all of 'em Beauties which the greatest Part of the Audience are incapable of tasting; I mean such as are only pleas'd with the distorted Gestures of a Comedian, with Farce and Show, and are better satisfy'd with two or three unreasonable Jests, than with

with the artful Solution of a Fable; but since it is not permitted me, Sir, to praise you according to my Wishes, it is much less in my Power to make my Commendations equal to your Merits. But to return to D---s.

As for the Contradiction, and Ill-nature, he has express'd in the Preface to his last Pamphlet, it is Punishment enough for him, that every one who reads it laugh at it, but for his Impudence in the 6th Page, not only every Pupil of the Muses, but every Admirer of the *Tatlers* and *Spectators* ought to scourge him.

Now, Sir, to show you the Vanity of this Hoary Bard, and the vast Applause he expects from his Great Work, will plainly appear by the following Story.

A certain Gentleman, just arriv'd from D---s.

from *Spain*, and other Parts, by chance meeting Mr. D---, among other Compliments told him, he observ'd his Character and Writings were very much taken Notice of in foreign Parts, to which, Mr. D--- reply'd, Yes, Sir, I know they do me Honour, but as for my own Country, the *English*, God's Death, they don't know there is such a Man amongst them.

I believe, Sir, most of our *English* Gentlemen, are sensible here is such a Man; it is impossible for any one to fancy a more exact Picture of him, than *Apemantus*, the Man-hater in *Timon* of *Athens*, tho' I must confess, *Apemantus* is a Man of much more humble Virtues. Another Instance of his Vanity plainly appears in his Dedication to my Lord *Chamberlain*, where, speaking of his Play, *Coriolanus*, he says,
that

that nothing comparable to it has been produc'd at the Theatre in *Drury-Lane*; what an incomparable Performance it is; let every impartial Reader judge, altho' every Beauty in the Play is *Shakespeare's*, yet this Critic has so misplac'd 'em, that they could not pass the heedless Eye of a School-boy.

I think, Sir, your Sentiments of a good Critic, in your *Spectator* on That Subject, is so just and noble, that, pardon me, Sir, if (for the Instruction of myself and many others, in particular Mr. *Dress*) I should quote some Passages, which I hope may be extus'd when they are so justly apply'd.

That there is nothing more absurd, than for a Man to set up for a good Critic, without an Insight into all the Parts of Learning; whereas many of those who have endeavour'd to signa-

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lize themselves by Works of this Nature among our *English* Writers, are not only defective in the above mention'd Particular, but plainly discover, by the Phrases they make use of, and their confus'd Way of thinking, that they are not acquainted with the most common and ordinary Systems of Arts and Sciences.

The Productions of a great Genius with many Lapses, and Inadvertencies, are infinitely preferable to the Works of an inferior kind of Author, who are scrupulously exact and conformable to all the Rules of correct Writing.

This, Sir, is in some Measure the Character of Mr. D---s, he very strenuously professes correct Writing, and confines himself to a few general Rules extracted out of the *French* Authors, which, with a certain Cant of Words,

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has set up this heavy Writer for a most judicious and formidable Critic.

It is no Wonder, Sir, to see him satisfy the Itch of his venomous Tongue, by venting his Malice against you, for Envy, rightly consider'd, is nothing but a Sorrow and Repining at other Mens Happiness, and I have the Charity to believe, this is the Vice most predominant in Mr. D---s.

In another Place you observe, that unseasonable Mirth in a Critic is capable of making a Beauty, as well as a Blemish the Subject of Derision: A Man who cannot write with Wit on a proper Subject is dull and stupid; but one who shews it in an improper Place is impertinent and absurd; besides, a Man who has the Gift of Ridicule is apt to find Fault with any Thing that gives him an Opportunity of exerting
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his belov'd Talent, and very often censures a Passage, not because there's any Fault in it, but because he can be merry upon it; such kinds of Pleasantry are very unfair and disingenious in Works of Criticism.

I hope, Sir, the Town will allow this Fault appears very plain in this Critic's Criticism on the Tragedy of *Cato*; and granting those Places he excepts against to be Errors, they are so trifling as not worth a Wise Man's Notice, for, as Mr. Dryden says in these two celebrated Lines,

*Errors, like Straws, upon the Surface flow,
He who would search for Pearls, must dive
below.*

And, as you tell us, a true Critic ought to dwell rather upon Excellencies
than

than Imperfections, to discover the conceal'd Beauties of a Writer, and communicate such Things to the World, as is worth their Observation; the most exquisite Words, and finest Strokes of an Author, are those which very often appear the most doubtful, and exceptionable, to a Man who wants a Relish for polite Learning; and these are they which a sower undistinguishing Critic generally attacks with the greatest Violence.

In my poor Opinion, Sir, (according to the Rule of Dramatic Writing) it is as compleat a Piece as ever was wrote: But since Mr. D---s is so very nice in his Taste, I have a great Mind to publish a Play I have by me, where, instead of troubling himself to criticize on the Faults, I shall defy him to show one Beauty.

I can but wonder, Sir, at the Behaviour of this Critic, to treat so many Gentlemen with such ill Manners. He envies Mr. *Cibber* for the same Reasons he does you, Sir, because his Works have met with their deserv'd Success; but why his ill Treatment should reach Mr. *Wilks*, and Mr. *Booth*, (neither professing themselves Authors) is very unwarrantable.

He says, Sir, in one of his critical Letters, that Mr. *Booth* has no more Judgment in Tragedy, than an Afs has in Musick, and instead of proving this impudent Assertion, (because we should not fail seeing his malicious Temper) he is so forgetful to say this ill-natur'd Thing in a Page where he praises Mr. *Booth* for his just Notion of Tragedy.

But

But by the Account of his former Conversation it appears, he was as agreeably ill-natur'd, as he is now, to prove which, I shall take the Freedom to trouble you, Sir, with a very entertaining Passage that pass'd between this Critic, *Mr. Purcell*, and *Mr. Congreve*, which is as follows:

Mr. Purcell and *Mr. Congreve* going into a Tavern, by chance met *D---s*, who went in with 'em; after a Glass or two had pass'd, *Mr. Purcell*, having some private Business with *Mr. Congreve*, wanted *D---s* out of the Room, and not knowing a more certain Way than Punning, (for you are to understand, Sir, *Mr. D---s* is as much surpriz'd at Pun as at a Bailiff) he proceeded after the following Manner: He pull'd the Bell, and call'd two or three Times, but no One answering, he put his Hand

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under the Table, and looking full at D---s, he said, I think this Table is like the Tavern; says D---s, (with his usual prophane Phrase) God's Death, Sir, How is this Table like the Tavern? Why, says Mr. Purcell, because here's ne'er a Drawer in it.

Says D---s, (starting up) God's Death, Sir, the Man that will make such an execrable Pun as that in my Company, will pick my Pocket, and so left the Room.

Now I appeal to you, Sir, on any reasonable Person, whether this Gentleman ought to employ his Time in studying malicious empty Criticisms, or a decent Behaviour.

But I fear, Sir, I intrude too much on your good Nature, therefore I shall only beg Leave to conclude with a Paragraph of Mr. Farquar's, which very elegantly

gantly express that Opinion, the better
Part of Mankind have of your Merit.

" That the greatest Panegyrick upon
" you, is the unprejudic'd and bare
" Truth of your Character, the Fire
" of Youth, with the Sedateness of a
" Senator, and the modern Gayety of
" an English Gentleman, with the No-
" ble Solidity of the Antient Briton.

I am, Sir,

Your most Obedient Servant,

BRIDGES-STREET,

Nov. 18. 1722.





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